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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 002012

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN BRIAN RORAFF  
EUR/ACE FOR RICK STODDARD

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAD](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: NDI SEES POTENTIAL IN TWO PARTIES, BUT NOT BIRLIK  
AND ERK

Classified By: Poloff Tim Buckley for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador met with the National Democracy Institute (NDI) Senior Program Director for Eurasia and Country Director on November 13. The Country Director is quietly consulting with four opposition parties, two of which have potential for developing into proper political parties -- the Ozod Dekhon (Free Farmers) Party and the Agrarian Movement. NDI proposed working with these groups "to create brand recognition" and develop strategies to help them develop "down the road." The Senior Program Director said that well-known Uzbek opposition parties Birlik and Erk are "spent forces" which are too prone to infighting and have lost much of their support base after years in exile. The Country Director reported that due to years of NDI building connections and visibility in Uzbekistan, it has not encountered the same difficulties as NDI has in Tajikistan. End summary.

"Not in the Revolution Business"

¶2. (C) The Ambassador met on November 13 with AmCit NDI Senior Program Director for Eurasia, and AmCit NDI Country Director. NDI is one of the few international NGOs still operating in Uzbekistan, and the Country Director attributed this to the organization's efforts to demonstrate its long-term focus on building a democratic process rather than seeking dramatic political changes that worry the GOU. The Tashkent NDI office has not encountered any of the problems reported in Tajikistan. However, the Country Director added that from his perspective, "sanctions by the U.S. would make it difficult to accomplish anything with this regime."

Two Budding Parties Have Promise...

¶3. (C) The NDI Country Director said he is currently quietly consulting with four opposition political parties, of which he feels only two have any potential to develop into meaningful organizations -- Ozod Dekhonlar (Free Farmers) Party and the Agrarian Movement. NDI would like to expand its efforts with these parties "to create brand recognition" among the populace. In particular, the idea is to help these parties build favor among Uzbek migrant laborers and their families by offering domestic support services such as warehouses (to help people store belongings) and establishing liaison offices. (Note: Ambassador strongly discouraged NDI representatives from establishing anything that could be

construed as offshore opposition to the regime, to which they agreed. End note.)

But Not Birlik and Erk

14. (C) The NDI representatives noted that too many western governments and observers look to well-known leaders of Birlik and Erk as the sole leaders of the Uzbek opposition. The NDI Senior Program Director for Eurasia said these two groups "are spent forces" which have lost a significant amount of their support base in Uzbekistan as a result of years of infighting and a perceived disconnect with current conditions in the country due to their prolonged absence. The NDI Country Director added that opposition parties "need to stop the constant infighting to be taken seriously in the west," which he noted does not seem likely. Rather, the focus should be on "making a home for reformers with rational thinking."

Comment

15. (C) NDI enjoys a unique level of access to Uzbek officials and opposition parties, and its observations offer useful perspectives. NDI has sometimes been criticized for not challenging the GOU enough, but it conducts regular civil society conferences that bring in outside speakers to present alternate points of view. These are unique platforms in the Uzbek context and deserve continued support.

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